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Our Little Secrets

Kerry's Silver Star

By Alexander Cockburn & Jeffrey St Clair

The incident that won US Navy lieutenant John Kerry his Silver Star, thus lofting him to the useful status of "war hero", occurred on February 28, 1969. His Swift boat was ferrying US "explosives experts" and some South Vietnamese soldiers up the Dong Cung river. After dropping them off, Kerry's boat came under small arms fire. Kerry turned the boat toward the source of the shots, beached the boat and opened up at the forest with the boat's .50 and .60 caliber machine guns.

By beaching the boat Kerry was disobeying standard orders forbidding this on the grounds that it made the craft and its crew a sitting duck. Kerry's motive? As crew member Michael "Duke" Medeiros explained it to Kerry's biographer, Douglas Brinkley, it was a matter of verifying kills. "We never knew whether we killed any VC or not. When fired upon, he [Kerry] wanted to beach the boat and go get the enemy."

The boat's machineguns had in fact killed a Vietnamese, described as "a VC guerilla", and they took evidence [undescribed] from the body.

The boat sped downstream and was fired on once more, by a rocket-propelled grenade launcher. Here's where accounts of the event diverge markedly, depending on the interests of the various narrators. The citation for Kerry's Silver Star describes the event this way: "With utter disregard for his own safety and the enemy rockets, he again ordered a charge on the

(**Kerry** *continued on page 2*)

Iraq, a Year Later
Baghdad Diary

By Patrick Cockburn

A quick way to assess American progress in Iraq is to take the four-lane highway leading west from Baghdad to the Euphrates. It is a dreary stretch of road, built by Saddam Hussein at the height of the Iran-Iraq war as his main supply route. On the way out of Baghdad, the US army has cut down or burned date palms and bushes which might give cover to guerrillas, but otherwise it does not look dangerous. In the last nine months, however, more American soldiers have been killed here - or just off the highway, in the dishevelled truck-stop towns of Abu Ghraib, Fallujah, Kaldiyah and Ramadi - than in any other part of Iraq.

Earlier this year, the US military command claimed the number of attacks on its forces was down since the capture of Saddam Hussein in December. On the other hand, soldiers in the field say that to avoid bureaucratic hassle they often don't report incidents when they come under fire. I decided to drive the seventy miles to Ramadi to see if the road was getting any safer. We never got there. On the outskirts of Baghdad we ran into a stalled convoy of tanks and armoured personnel carriers loaded onto enormous vehicle transporters. A soldier stopped us, saying: 'We discovered an IED (Improvised Explosive Device) on the road and we are trying to defuse it.' Along with other Iraqi cars and trucks, we turned off the road and drove along a track between a stagnant canal and a rubbish dump where dogs were tearing at the garbage.

After half an hour we arrived in Abu Ghraib (also the site of Iraq's largest prison), in a market full of rickety stalls selling fruit and vegetables. I stepped out of the car to make a call on a Thuraya satellite phone. As I was talking, a US patrol drove by in their Humvees, the extra-wide jeeps used by the army. Suddenly, their vehicles stopped. Half a dozen soldiers ran towards our car, pointing their guns at our chests. They screamed, 'Get down on your knees': and 'Put your hands behind your head.' We did both. One of them snatched my Thuraya. When Mohammed al-Khazraji, the driver, said something in Arabic, a soldier shouted 'Shut the fuck up.' I said I was a British journalist. We waited on our knees until, after a few minutes, the soldiers lost interest and climbed back into a Humvee. As we drove out of Abu Ghraib, we heard the voice of a preacher at nearby mosque denouncing the occupation, saying 'the occupiers now attack everybody and make life impossible.'

A few miles further down the road, we reached the turn off for the town of Fallujah, but it was blocked by US soldiers and members of the Iraqi Civil Defence Corps, one of the paramilitary organisations now being rapidly expanded. A plump Iraqi soldier, resting his hands on his sub-machine gun, said 'the Americans are carrying out a big operation and there is a big battle with the Mojahedin around a mosque in Fallujah.' He seemed to regard the American activities with little interest and pointed to a track by which we could enter Fallujah without being stopped by the cordon round the town.

This was not a particularly violent day on the road west from Baghdad. A few days earlier, a Blackhawk medical evacuation helicopter had been shot down by a heat seeking missile near Fallujah and all

(**IRAQ** *continued on page 4)*

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(**Kerry** *continued from page 1)*

enemy, beached his boat only ten feet from the VC rocket position, and personally led a landing party ashore in pursuit of the enemy. Upon sweeping the area an immediate search uncovered an enemy rest and supply area which was destroyed. The extraordinary daring and personal courage of Lieutenant (junior grade) KERRY in attacking the numerically superior force in the face of intense fire were responsible for the highly successful mission."

This citation, issued by Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, was based on the incident report, written by John Kerry. Missing from the Zumwalt version was a dramatic confrontation described by Kerry 27 years later, in 1996, in the heat of a nasty reelection fight against Republican William Weld, when Kerry was seeking a third senate term. Kerry disclosed to Jonathan Carroll, writing for the New Yorker, that he had faced down a Viet Cong standing a few feet from him with a B-40 rocket launcher; "It was either going to be him or it was going to be us", Kerry told Carroll. "It was that simple. I don't know why it wasn't us – I mean, to this day. He had a rocket pointed right at our boat. He stood up out of that hole, and none of us saw him until he was standing in front of us, aiming a rocket right at us, and, for whatever reason, he didn't pull the trigger – he turned and ran. He was shocked to see our boat right in front him. If he'd pulled the trigger, we'd all be dead. I just won't talk about all of it. I don't and I can't. The things that probably really turn me I've never told anybody. Nobody would understand." (Kerry may not have wanted to talk but he certainly liked to screen. The first time Kerry took Hollywood star Dana Delany to his home in the Eighties she says his big move was showing her video clips taken of him in the Navy when he was in Vietnam. She never went out with him again.)

Two of Kerry's crew members, Medeiros and machine-gunner Tommy Belodeau, found no mystery in why the VC soldier didn't fire his B-40 RPG launcher. The Vietnamese was effectively unarmed. He hadn't reloaded the RPG after his first shot at Kerry's boat as it headed down the river.

Later in that campaign year of 1996 Belodeau described the full scope of the incident to the Boston Globe's David Warsh. Belodeau told Warsh that he opened with his M-60 machine gun on the Vietnamese man at a range of ten feet after they'd beached the boat. The machine gun bullets caught the Vietnamese in the legs, and the wounded man crawled behind a nearby hooch. At this point, Belodeau said, Kerry had seized an M-16 rifle, jumped out of the boat, gone up to the man who Belodeau says was near death, and finished him off.

When the Globe published Warsh's account of Belodeau's recollection, essentially accusing Kerry of a war crime, the Kerry campaign quickly led Madeiros to the press and he described how the Vietnamese, felled by Belodeau's machinegun fire, got up, grabbed the rocket launcher and ran off down a trail through the forest and a disappeared around a bend. As Kerry set off after him, Medeiros followed. They came round the corner to find the Vietnamese once again pointing the RPG at them ten feet away. He didn't fire and Kerry shot him dead with his rifle.

Circulating around veterans' websites in early February of this year was an email written by Mike Morrison who, like Kerry, won a Bronze Star in Vietnam. Morrison who later went on to write speeches for Lee Iacocca, was highly suspicious of Kerry's claims to martial glory. In a letter to his brother Ed he wrote as follows:

"I've long thought that John Kerry's war record was phoney. We talked about it when you were here. It's mainly been instinct because, as you know, nobody who claims to have seen the action he does would so shamelessly flaunt it for political gain.

"I was in the Delta shortly after he left. I know that area well. I know the operations he was involved in well. I know the tactics and the doctrine used. I know the equipment. Although I was attached to CTF-116 (PBRs) I spent a fair amount of time with CTF-115 (swift boats), Kerry's command. Here are my problems and suspicions:

"(1) Kerry was in-country less than four months and collected, a Bronze Star, a Silver Star and three purple hearts. I never heard of anybody with any outfit I worked with (including SEAL One, the Sea Wolves, Riverines and the River Patrol Force) collecting that much hardware so fast, and for such pedestrian actions. The Swifts did a commendable job. But that duty wasn't the worst you could draw. They operated only along the coast and in the major rivers (Bassac and Mekong). The rough stuff in the hot areas was mainly handled by the smaller, faster PBRs. Fishy.

"(2) Three Purple Hearts but no limp. All injuries so minor that no time lost from duty. Amazing luck. Or he was putting himself in for medals every time he bumped his head on the wheel house hatch? Combat on the boats was almost always at close range. You didn't have minor wounds. At least not often. Not three times in a row. Then he used the three purple hearts to request a trip home eight months before the end of his tour. Fishy.

"(3) The details of the event for which he was given the Silver Star make no sense at all. Supposedly, a B-40 (rocket propelled grenade) was fired at the boat and missed. Charlie jumps up with the launcher in his hand, the bow gunner knocks him down with the twin .50 (caliber machine guns), Kerry beaches the boat, jumps off, shoots Charlie, and retrieves the launcher. If true, he did everything wrong. (a) Standard procedure when you took rocket fire was to put your stern to the action and go (away) balls to the wall. A B-40 has the ballistic integrity of a Frisbee after about 25 yards, so you put 50 yards or so between you and the beach and begin raking it with your .50s. (Did you ever see anybody get knocked down with a .50 caliber round and get up? The guy was dead or dying. The rocket launcher was empty. There was no reason to go after him (except if you knew he was

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no danger to you - just flopping around in the dust during his last few seconds on earth, and you wanted some derring-do in your after-action report). And we didn't shoot wounded people. We had rules against that, too.

"Kerry got off the boat. This was a major breach of standing procedures. Nobody on a boat crew ever got off a boat in a hot area. EVER! The reason was simple. If you had somebody on the beach your boat was defenseless. It couldn't run and it couldn't return fire. It was stupid and it put his crew in danger. He should have been relieved and reprimanded. I never heard of any boat crewman ever leaving a boat during or after a firefight."

The account that makes sense to us is Belodeau's. There were three high-powered machine guns on the boat and one Vietnamese at close range on the land and Belodeau says his machinegun knocked him down. Even if the Vietnamese fighter miraculously got up and started running away down that trail, is it likely that the two would have pursued him down an unknown path on foot? Wouldn't it be more likely that the boat would have used its machineguns again, blazing away as on Kerry's own account they did, day and day and night after night?

Kerry's Bronze Star

On March 13, 1969, two weeks after the episode that yielded the Silver Star Kerry saw his last slice of action. It got him his Bronze Star and his third purple heart, which meant he could file a request to be transferred out of Vietnam.

Kerry earned the Bronze Star by pulling another lieutenant out of the water after the latter's Swift boat had hit a mine. That same mine's detonation caused enough wake to throw Kerry against a bulkhead, bruising his arm. This was classed as a wound, which meant the third purple heart. Then, amid rifle fire, Kerry maneuvered his boat toward Lieutenant Rassman and hoisted him onto the deck.

Both boats had been on yet another mission (see the last issue of CounterPunch) ferrying Green Berets, US Navy SEALs and Nung assassins to a village. Once again they had mistakenly targeted a friendly village, where they opened fire on South Vietnamese troops who were interrogating a group of women and children lined up against a wall.

When the Green Berets and SEALs opened fire, the South Vietnamese soldiers jumped the wall and at least ten of the women and children were killed. Meanwhile, against orders, Kerry had again left his boat and attached himself to the Nung and was, by his own words, "shooting and blowing things up". One of the Nung threw a grenade into a hut which turned out to be filled with sacks of rice. Kerry got grains of rice and some bits of metal debris embedded in his ass, the most severe wounds he sustained in Vietnam.

With three purple hearts, the Silver and Bronze Stars, Kerry now applied for reassignment as a personal aide to a senior officer in either Boston, New York or Washington DC. He ended up in New York working for Admiral Walter F. Schlech in New York. In January 1970 he applied for early discharge to run for office. As he put it, he'd decided not to join the antiwar movement but to work within the system and try and win a seat in Congress from the Third District in Massachusetts.

Zumwalt: Kerry's "Record Would Haunt Him"

A former assistant secretary of defense and Fletcher School of Diplomacy professor, W. Scott Thompson, recalled a conversation with the late Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr. that clearly had a slightly different take on Kerry's recollection of their discussions:

"[T]he fabled and distinguished chief of naval operations, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, told me--30 years ago when he was still CNO [chief naval officer in Vietnam] that during his own command of U.S. naval forces in Vietnam, just prior to his anointment as CNO, young Kerry had created great problems for him and the other top brass, by killing so many noncombatant civilians and going after other non-military targets. "We had virtually to straitjacket him to keep him under control", the admiral said. "Bud" Zumwalt got it right when he assessed Kerry as having large ambitions--but promised that his career in Vietnam would haunt him if he were ever on the national stage."

IS YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER WORKING FOR THE PENTAGON?

BY JORGE MARISCAL

The increased presence of military recruitment programs in the nation's public schools is a little known consequence of the Department of Defense's plans for maintaining manpower levels in coming decades. By targeting teachers, counselors, coaches, principals, and other school personnel known in Pentagon jargon as "influencers", each branch of the armed forces seeks to create a pool of unofficial recruiters who are in daily contact with young people and who can guide them towards military careers.

The centerpiece of these stealth-recruiting strategies is the Educator Workshop Program (EWP). According to the Marine Corps' EWP website, teachers and others who participate in the program: "Get a basic understanding of the Marine Corps and are better equipped to advise their students about our career opportunities. These workshops dispel the myths about recruit training and the Marine Corps' mission by providing you with a first hand experience that is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

After being bussed to boot camp, EWP participants are given a week-long glimpse of military life in a kind of ersatz "shock and awe" designed to instill enhanced respect for recruits. Experiences range from the initial harangues delivered by drill instructors to visits to weapons training activities as well as the final act of the "Crucible", the 72-hour ordeal that pushes recruits to the limits of their endurance and concludes with a patriotic spectacle complete with amplified anthems at the foot of a mock Iwo Jima Memorial.

The forty or so educators from each recruiting area who participate every year are flown to either San Diego or Parris Island, lodged in nearby hotels, and reimbursed upon their return with a $225 per diem. The desired reaction from educators was expressed succinctly by Staff Sgt. Jesús Lora, public affairs officer for the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego: "I've talked to one from last year's Educator Workshop and she said it was an experience that will be treasured forever. She now passes the experiences she felt last year and teaches it to her students." This, of course, is precisely the point. "Influencers" are expected to communicate their excitement about their well-controlled and sanitized "experience" of boot camp to their young charges.

Not all "influencers" are welcome to the workshops. In an article written by a recruiter in Lansing, Michigan, EWP organizers were told to eliminate as work-

(**Pentagon** *continued on page 6)*

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(**Iraq** *continued from page 1*)
nine soldiers on board killed. Many more have died when supply trucks or soft-skinned Humvees are caught by roadside bombs, the notorious IEDs, which usually consist of heavy artillery rounds, 155mm and 122mm shells with a detonator, known to the soldiers as 'convoy killers'. Again and again since last summer, these bombs have torn vehicles apart, often killing two or three soldiers. By the standards of Vietnam it is not a very big war, but it is now on the same level as guerrilla campaigns fought by Hezbollah in south Lebanon in the 1990s or by the IRA in south Armagh. It is also not getting any better from the US point of view. The local insurgents in Fallujah are becoming more confident. In one attack in February they almost killed General John Abizaid, the US Middle East commander, and in another overran the police headquarters, killing some twenty men.

The soldiers in the specialized units of the 82nd Airborne Division sound a little perplexed by the sort of war they are fighting. At a base called 'Volturno', hidden inside an old Baath party recreation camp beside a lake, a platoon of combat engineers, in charge of clearing the road of mines, ruefully explain that they didn't expect to be fighting this kind of war. In a dark hut, Staff Sgt Jeremy Anderson, leader of a squad of eight sappers, says he and his men were trained to deal with big conventional minefields such as those laid by the old Soviet army. Nobody thought they would be dealing with the sort of amateur but lethal devices planted by guerrillas around Fallujah. Anderson says the only way he could get information about IEDs was by using an ageing army manual on 'booby traps in Vietnam'. Another sapper called out, 'I never even heard of an IED before I came to Iraq.'

Outside the hut, Sgt Anderson showed off an old green-painted 155mm South African made shell, whose TNT is wrapped around with plastic explosives, to produce razor edged pieces of shrapnel eight to twelve inches long. The guerrillas bury several of these a few feet from the road with the nose of the shell removed and replaced with blasting caps. These are connected by wires to a battery, usually taken from a motorcycle. The bomb can then be detonated by means of a command wire three or four hundred metres long. Alternatively, the bombers can send a signal to the battery remotely by using a car door opener, the control for a child's toy or some type of mobile phone - which explains why the soldiers who had stopped us when they saw me using a satellite phone had seemed so edgy: they had been told that Thurayas could be used to detonate a bomb under their feet.

Anderson, an articulate soldier from Minnesota, displayed a grudging respect for the versatility of the bomb makers. One bomb was found attached to the underside of a bridge over the highway so it would explode downwards as a US convoy passed underneath. Another was wired to a solar panel which, when the dirt shading it from the sun was gently brushed away by a US soldier, would immediately detonate. The sappers work by walking gingerly along the verges of the roads. Anderson explained: 'We look for wires - anything that seems out of place.' They gently prod the sandy ground with short, silver-coloured wands. The wands, eighteen inches long and looking like a conductor's baton, are made out of titanium and are non-magnetic. They are a curiously delicate and old-fashioned piece of equipment and in a way symbolic of the type of war the US is now fighting in Iraq, in which the battle tanks and heavy howitzers rumbling down the roads are useless.

Conventional mine detectors, designed to detect metal, do not work here because Iraqis use the side of the road as a rubbish dump. It is impossible to distinguish buried shells from discarded cans and other junk. Guerrillas have also started planting booby traps designed specifically to kill the sappers. 'Somebody has watched us at work,' said Anderson. 'They saw that we always pick up rocks and turn them over to make sure nothing is hidden underneath. So one day they tied a string to a rock rigged to an old water bottle with a power source inside attached to some old mortar rounds.'

The other spectacular losses along American troops around Fallujah have come when helicopters are shot down. Last November, I was in the town, where two American contractors had been shot and killed, when a ground-to-air missile, fired from date groves near the Euphrates, shot down a giant Chinook helicopter, killing sixteen men. It is the effective use of roadside bombs and ground-to-air shoulder held missiles which surprised the US army in the second half of last year. These two weapons sent casualties surging above the number killed in the three week war. The attacks might be pinpricks for the 130,000-strong US army but politically they were unsustainable in the run-up to a Presidential election. The arrogance bred by the swift defeat of Saddam Hussein began to dissipate ('They were drunk on victory,' said one Kurdish leader).

The helicopter pilots who try to guard convoys around Fallujah are based ten miles from the town in an old Iraqi airbase at Habbaniyah. Near a hanger gutted by fire is stationed a detachment equipped with light Kiowa Warrior helicopters - US helicopters are all named after Indian tribes - which swoop and hover over the convoys or try to follow guerrillas on the ground. There is a steady trickle of losses. A few days before we arrived, one of the pilots had been killed when the medical evacuation helicopter taking him to Baghdad was shot down. His death had been widely publicized, mainly because 12 years ago, as a ground soldier, he had taken part in the failed attempt to rescue US helicopter crews in Mogadishu during the disastrous American intervention in Somalia.

The helicopter pilots and their gunners discussed the chances of being shot down. They were not worried by being shot at with AK-47 submachine guns. Except at night, when they can see the tracer, they seldom know when they are under fire. One pilot volunteered that for an Iraqi farmer on the ground 'it must be difficult

Conventional mine detectors, designed to detect metal, do not work here because Iraqis use the side of the road as a rubbish dump.

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The US army in Iraq was always more vulnerable than it looked. Its high level of mechanization meant that it was very dependant on a continuing flow of supplies.

to resist the temptation to shoot at us, like duck hunting.' A few minutes later, evidently reflecting that his marks might be considered flippant, he asked urgently that his perfectly sensible remark not be attributed to him. These days, the helicopters fly fast and low to avoid the missiles. A gunner in one of the Kiowas said: 'The helicopter flies at 100 feet, so by the time anyone on the ground can react it's gone.' Less comfortingly, he said the device on the roof for confusing heat seeking missiles 'works 85 per cent of the time'. He did not add that the missiles, by forcing the helicopters to fly fast and low, make it very difficult for them to see anything on the ground.

We asked Major Thomas Von Eschenbach, the commander of the squadron, who he thought was shooting at him. He repeated the official line, that there are two groups: 'One are former regime loyalists, with tribal loyalties to Saddam Hussein, and the second are foreign fighters who may be coming in from Syria.' In practice, the helicopter pilots admitted they see very little of Iraqis and then only from the air. A troop commander said: 'The men are mostly 5'6' to 5'10' tall and are between 150 to 180 pounds. The hardest part is picking out the bad guys. About half of Iraqis seem to drive white pick-ups.'

Von Eschenbach said that anybody could shoot at a helicopter with a rocket propelled grenade launcher, which required ten minutes training, but a surface-to-air missile was more complicated. He suspected foreign fighters were at work, though we pointed out that half a million former members of the Iraqi army might also be involved.

As for the proficiency of the guerrillas who were shooting down helicopters, Von Eschenbach said: 'It is just like the Afghans did with the Russians in Afghan. They find out our weaknesses.' Helicopters fly in pairs and the guerrillas always attack the second or 'trail' helicopter so there is nobody to see what is happening in the seconds before the missile strikes.

* * *

One supposed lesson of the two wars against Saddam, as well as those against Serbia in Kosovo and the Taliban, was that the nature of war had changed. Overwhelming air superiority and missiles striking with pinpoint accuracy meant that the US would always win. The lessons of the US in Vietnam and Somalia, and the Russians in Afghanistan need no longer be learned because they were outdated and irrelevant.

This was never true. It is noticeable that the US soldiers in the field often make ominous analogies with Vietnam or Somalia but the generals back in Baghdad deny they see any parallel.

The US army in Iraq was always more vulnerable than it looked. Its high level of mechanisation meant that it was very dependant on a continuing flow of supplies. These could be brought in only by road, making the army very road-bound. If the Iraqis had placed bombs along the highway from Kuwait to Baghdad last year, the advance would have been far slower and more costly, and the last nine months have shown that the US army, with a vast number of vehicles on the roads at any one time, is easily attacked by guerrillas using crude explosive devices.

Bases are difficult to defend against mortars. In almost twenty years, the Israeli army in southern Lebanon, with an equivalent superiority to Hezbollah as the US has over the guerrillas, found no answer to these tactics.

The American commanders respond that they have lost only 3,600 soldiers dead and wounded from hostile fire and accidents since the start of the war, not a high number given the number of troops involved. But it also misses the point. There are two types of guerrilla war.

The first is to build up guerrilla resistance step by step until it forms a regular army: the classic example is Mao Tse-Tung in China.

The second type involves sporadic attacks by a limited number of guerrillas, with the aim of imposing unrelenting political pressure on the enemy, contesting control but without hoping to win a military victory. This was the type of campaign waged by the IRA in Ireland in 1919-21, the Irgun in Palestine in the 1940s, EOKA under Grivas in Cyprus in the 1950s and the IRA again in Northern Ireland. It is this second type of war which the US is facing and does not quite know how to combat.

Things could also get a lot worse. Most of the guerrilla action currently is in the Sunni towns round Baghdad. It is less intense in the capital itself and in Mosul, the largest Sunni city, with a population of 1.6 million. Blair and Jack Straw have on occasion drawn comfort from the limited area in which the attacks occur, without reflecting that if the present level of guerrilla action causes so much trouble what will happen if it spreads to all the Sunni Arab parts of the country.

A further difficulty is that the guerrillas belong to many different organizations without any central command, on top of which there is the suicide bombing campaign, which is directed primarily at anybody, Iraqi or foreign, who might help the US.

Not all the US military commanders have been as heavy handed as Bremer and the CPA in Baghdad. In Mosul province, Gen David Petraeus, the commander of the 101st Airborne Division, was far more

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(**Iraq** *continued from page 5*)

careful not to alienate the Sunni establishment, which was a main recruiting ground for the Iraqi army (there are 1,100 generals in Mosul because Saddam often paid off retiring officers with promotion). Exile parties like the Iraqi National Congress and the Iraqi National Accord, deeply resented in the capital for taking over jobs and businesses, were kept at arms length.

There have been assassinations, suicide bombs and ambushes in Mosul, but not on the same scale as around Baghdad. Petraeus, who left in February after ten months, said his most important advice to his successor was 'not to align too closely with one ethnic group, political party, tribe, religious group or social element'.

Washington is struggling to free itself from the trap into which it plunged so eagerly a year ago. Suddenly, Bremer and the CPA are desperately cultivating two men they treated until recently with contempt: Ali Sistani, the Shiite Grand Ayatollah, in the shrine city of Najaf, and Kofi Annan.

But too many mistakes were made in the first year of the occupation for a change of course to work now.

As Sir Eyre Crowe, a senior mandarin at the Foreign Office, warned just before Britain first entered Iraq almost a century ago: '[in war] political and strategic considerations must go hand in hand. Failure of such harmony must lead either to military disaster or political retreat.' CP

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(**Pentagon** *continued from page 3*)

shop participants anyone with prior military experience. One of the prime goals of EWP is to "dispel all misconceptions about the Marine Corps that infiltrate the American society" and so military veterans are considered to be potentially disruptive, given their first-hand knowledge of military values and practices.

On the one hand, then, the Pentagon courts professional educators in order to exploit their influence over young people. In a complementary move designed to achieve the same result, military veterans are moved into school systems through the so-called "Troops to Teachers" program (TTT). Initiated as a Department of Defense and Department of Education collaboration in 1994, TTT aims to place veterans in teaching positions across the country, with an emphasis on districts in poor and underserved areas. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 provides funding for TTT through Fiscal Year (FY) 2006.

To date over 6,000 teachers have been placed and another 6,000 are currently in training or seeking employment. In California where cash-strapped school systems such as Los Angeles and San Diego serve large African American and Latino communities, military veterans are given a six-week crash course and placed directly into the classroom.

Given the crisis in educational budgets and teacher shortages, it could be argued that there is nothing inherently wrong with a program that attempts to help veterans transition into careers in education. But the long-term impact of exposing children to "military values" and experiences fits well with the recruiters' goal of "getting them while they're young".

Both the EWP and TTT programs are key elements in the campaign to instill military values, which takes many forms. For example, the "Take Charge!" initiative designed by the Army Recruiting Command, for example, is disguised as "stay in school" program. Across the nation, education officials are encouraging teachers to contact local recruiters about such programs.

What better institutional site on which to conduct the necessary recruiting campaigns than the nation's dysfunctional public schools systems that have been thrown into chaos by budget cuts, overcrowding and neglect?

In his 1907 study of European militarism, the German revolutionary, Karl Liebknecht, wrote: "Militarism makes its appearance as a system which saturates the whole public and private life of our people with the militarist spirit." One of the first thinkers to point towards the entire range of social practices and discourses that prepare the general population for military action and violence of the sort that ultimately took his life, Liebknecht recognized that the State's objective was to make military thinking both a logical and acceptable part of everyday life.

Liebknecht argued that the struggle against militarism must begin with the young in both the urban and rural areas of the nation. CP

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